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Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 PM-03 PRS-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8681
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 MANILA 5910

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, RP
SUBJECT: THE PHILIPPINES UNDER MARCOS

1. AFTER NEARLY FOUR YEARS, I AM LEAVING THE PHILIPPINES AS FRUSTRATED AS ALL MY PREDECESSORS HAVE BEEN AND AS CONCERNED AS ALL MY SUCCESSORS WILL BE. WHEN I FIRST CAME HERE, I THOUGHT IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT MARCOS, AS THE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT MAN THAT HE IS, WOULD USE THE AUTHORITY WHICH HE HAS CONSOLIDATED IN HIMSELF TO PROVIDE URGENT DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP TO THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF
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PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POTENTIAL. I ASSUMED THAT HE HAD ALREADY AMASSED A SIGNIFICANT FORTUNE, WHICH HE DID NOT NEED TO ENHANCE, AND THAT HE COULD TURN HIS ATTENTION TO HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY BOOKS.

2. I HAVE RELUCTANTLY COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE WELFARE OF THE PHILIPPINES IS OF ONLY SECONDARY CONCERN TO

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MARCOS. HIS PRIMARY, ALMOST PRIMORDIAL, PREOCCUPATION
SEEMS TO BE TO FIND WAYS IN WHICH HE CAN ENLARGE AND
SAFEGUARD HIS WORLDLY POSSESSIONS, AND THOSE OF HIS WIFE,
SO THAT THEY CAN BE PASSED INTACT TO THE MARCOS AND
ROMUALDEZ PROGENY, TOGETHER WITH THE POLITICAL POWER WHICH
THIS WEALTH CAN BUY. THIS IS THE PRIORITY WHICH INFORMS
THE PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS AND CONSUMES A SIGNIFICANT PORTION
OF HIS TIME, BUT IT REACHES EXTRAORDINARY EXTREMES IN THE
CONDUCT OF HIS WIFE. HER FABULOUS COLLECTIONS OF DRESSES,
OF JEWELS, OF ART (SOME OF THEM FRAUDS), HER PRIVATE JET
(WITH SHOWER BATH), HER "GUEST HOUSES" AND "BEACH HOUSES,"
ALL ACCUMULATED DURING THE TEN YEARS OF HER HUSBAND'S TENURE,
ARE INSENSITIVELY OSTENTATIOUS IN A COUNTRY WITH PER CAPITA
INCOME OF $350. HER VARIOUS "PROJECTS," SUCH AS THE
HEART CENTER (UNUSED), THE CONVENTION CENTER (OVERBUILT),
THE LUXURY HOTELS (ONE THIRD OCCUPIED) ALL REPRESENT HER
CAPRICIOUS TAX UPON THE RESOURCES AND PATIENCE OF A PEOPLE
SADLY IN NEED OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS.

3. IN THE BEGINNING, I HAD BEEN PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE
MARCOS REASONING THAT SOME OF THE EXCESSES OF PRE-MARTIAL
LAW PHILIPPINE "DEMOCRACY" NEEDED TO BE SUPPRESSED FOR THE
SAKE OF EFFICIENCY. SINCE THE AUTHORITARIAN RULE HE
INTRODUCED SEEMED LARGELY ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF
FILIPINOS AND SINCE THERE WAS VERY LITTLE REPRESSION AND
NO OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED BRUTALITY, I THOUGHT A GOOD CASE
COULD BE MADE THAT THE TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT OF THE
EXTRAVAGANT AND INEFFICIENT PHILIPPINE "DEMOCRACY" BY ONE
MAN RULE WAS A TOLERABLE PRICE TO PAY IF THAT MAN WERE
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INTELLIGENT AND COMPETENT (AS MARCOS IS) AND IF HE WERE
PREPARED TO DEVOTE HIS FULL EFFORTS TO THE STAGGERING TASK
OF KEEPING THE WELFARE OF HIS PEOPLE AHEAD OF THE ENORMOUS
POPULATION CRUSH.

4. THE CURRENT MARCOS REGIME DOES PROVIDE BETTER GOVERNMENT
SERVICES THAN ANY OF ITS PREDECESSORS. IT IS MORE EFFICIENT
AND HAS ARTICULATED A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO HELP THIS
COUNTRY REALIZE ITS POTENTIALS. A NUMBER OF COMPETENT,
AND HONEST, SENIOR TECHNOCRATS REMAIN WITH THE REGIME AND,
WITHIN THE LATITUDE ALLOWED THEM, CONTINUE TO PRESS FORWARD
WITH THIS PROGRAM. BUT MARCOS HIMSELF, IN THE PAST TWO
YEARS, HAS GIVEN IT LITTLE MORE THAN LIP SERVICE. AND
WHEN HE FIRED ALEX MELCHOR, IN NOVEMBER 1975, HE LOST HIS
LAST DIRECT LINK WITH THE PROGRAM AND THE ONE ELEMENT WHICH
COULD PUT AN ADEQUATE SENSE OF URGENCY INTO THE TASK.

5. INSTEAD, HE HAS DEVOTED ALMOST ALL HIS ENERGY AND

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CONSIDERABLE INGENUITY TO THE JOB OF TINKERING WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM SO THAT HE CAN RETAIN AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ABOLITION OF MARTIAL LAW AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A COSMETIC FACSIMILE OF A LEGISLATIVE BODY. IN DOING THIS, HE HAS INSULTED THE INTELLIGENTSIA OF THIS COUNTRY, WORRIED THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND ALIENATED SOME OF HIS SUPPORTERS. AT THE SAME TIME, BY ALLOWING HIS WIFE TO GAIN MORE PROMINENCE AND POWER, AND BY MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR HER TO BE HIS SUCCESSOR, HE HAS FRIGHTENED MANY PASSIVE PEOPLE WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE BE SYMPATHETIC TO HIM.
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6. MANY OBSERVERS, INCLUDING MOST OF MY COLLEAGUES IN THE FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC COPRS, CONSIDER THAT MARCOS IS REALLY A MAN OF GOOD INTENTIONS, BUT THAT HIS PROMISE HAS BEEN SKEWED BY THE FORCEFUL PERSONALITY OF HIS WIFE. THEY BELIEVE THAT, LEFT TO HIS OWN DEVICES WITHOUT HER, HE WOULD DEVOTE HIMSELF EXCLUSIVELY TO THE TASKS OF THE COUNTRY'S WELFARE AND SEEK THAT PROPER PAGE IN THE NATION'S HISTORY BOOKS. I THINK THAT IS TOO FACILE AN EXPLANATION OF THE MARCOS MOTIVATION. WHILE THEE IS NO DLUBT THAT HIS WIFE IS EXTRAVAGANTLY LESS DISCREET THAN HE IS, I THINK THAT HER CONCENTRATION UPON THE FIRST PERSON SINGULAR REPRESENTS THE SAME SET OF PRIORITIES THAT GUIDE HIM. IT IS TRUE THAT HE SHELTERS HIMSELF BEHIND SOME OF HER MORE RAMPANT ACTIONS, AND USES HER AS A LIGHTNING ROD TO DISTRACT RESENTMENT FROM HIM, BUT I DOUBT THAT MALACANANG PALACE IS WRACKED BY A GREAT STRUGGLE OF PRINCIPLE BETWEEN ITS TWO PRIME OCCUPANTS.

7. THEIR CONSENSUS SEEMS TO REST ON THEIR INSECURE CONCERN THAT A GOVERNMENT WHICH THEY CAN NO LONGER CONTROL, EVEN BY ATTAINDER, WOULD STRIP THEM OF THEIR WEALTH AND DISCARD THEM IN THE SAME WAY THEY HAVE TREATED THE LOPEZ FAMILY. THEY APPEAR DRIVEN, THEREFORE, TO ESTABLISH SOME SORT OF INSTITUTIONAL DYNASTY (NOT NECESSARILY A FAMILY ONE) WHICH WILL PERMIT THEIR NEW OLIGARCHIC HOLDINGS TO REMAIN INTACT AND ALWAYS A FORCE TO RECKON WITH IN THE PHILIPPINES. THE EXAMPLE OF MIGUEL ALEMAN IN MEXICO HAS NOT BEEN LOST ON THEM.

8. THIS UNHAPPY ANALYSIS DOES NOT AUGUR FOR A BRIGHT PROGNOSIS. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO TEMPER THAT PROGNOSIS TO REALITY. ONE OF THE MORE AUSTUTE JOURNALISTIC OBSERVERS OF THE PHILIPPINES (HARVEY STOCKWIN, FAR EAST ECONOMIC REVIEW) HAS MARSHALLED MANY OF THESE SAME FACTORS AND DRAWN THE CONSLUSION THAT THE PHILIPPINES IS A

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"SMOLDERING VOLCANO," WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO ERUPT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. RAUL MANGLAPUS AND OTHER WISHFUL THINKERS AMONG THE PHILIPPINE EXILE COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES, AS WELL AS DOMESTIC OPPOSITIONISTS SUCH AS SENATOR SALONGA, SUBSCRIBE TO THE SAME THESIS.

9. I DO NOT AGREE. ALTHOUGH THERE IS RESENTMENT, IT IS SO FRAGMENTED THAT IT IS INEFFECTIVE. THE FORCES IN THE PHILIPPINE SOCIETY WHICH MIGHT LEAD AN "ERUPTION" ARE CLEVERLY KEPT PLACATED, OFF BALANCE, OR INTIMIDATED BY SHREWD MARCOS TACTICS. THE ARMED FORCES, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE BETTER TREATED, MORE PAMPERED, AND ENJOY MORE AUTHORITY

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THAN EVER BEFORE. THE CHURCH IS SPLIT AND CONSTANTLY
KEPT OFF GUARD BY MARCOS THREATS TO TAX ITS PROPERTY,
REGULATE ITS SCHOOLS, OR APPROVE A DIVORCE DECREE. THE
BUSINESS COMMUNITY, WHILE SELECTIVELY SUBJECTED TO
PREDATORY MARCOS OR ROMUALDEZ MUSCLE, IS GENERALLY
PROSPEROUS, CONTENT WITH "LAW AND ORDER" AND SATISFIED
WITH LOW WAGE POLICIES. IN SHORT, THERE DOES NOT APPEAR
TO BE ANY EFFECTIVE CATALYST FOR AN ERUPTION, AND THE
REMARKABLE PATIENCE AND TOLERANCE OF THE AVERAGE FILIPINO,
SWADDLED IN THE COMPASSION OF THE FAMILY SYSTEM, MAKES
HIM ANYTHING BUT BRITTLE TINDER FOR A FLAMING REVOLT.

10. THE MORE LIKELY PROGNOSIS IS, THEREFORE, THAT MARCOS
WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE, BY THE SAME COMBINATION OF
TACTICS HE HAS USED FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, TO KEEP
CONTROL OF THE PHILIPPINES AND TO PAY JUST ENOUGH ATTENTION
TO ITS WELFARE TO KEEP THE COUNTRY QUIESCENT. DESPITE
HIS 60 YEARS, HE IS IN VIGOROUS GOOD HEALTH AND THIS
PROGNOSIS COULD COVER A LONG SPAN OF YEARS.

11.ON THE OTHER HAND, ACTS OF FATE OR VIOLENT ACTION CAN
NOT BE RULED OUT. THE MAN AMOK, THE "JURAMENTADO" IS A

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PHENOMENON WELL KNOWN IN THIS COUNTRY. IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE THAT SOME INDIVIDUAL, OR INDIVIDUALS, MIGHT RESORT TO ASSASSINATION. THE TARGET COULD EITHER BE MARCOS OR HIS WIFE. IN MANY WASY, THE LATTER IS THE MORE LIKELY TARGET. SHE IS MORE CONSPICUOUS, AROUSES MORE BITTER EMOTIONS, AND IS LESS HEAVILY PROTECTED BY SECURITY. IN FACT, ONE SENIOR PHILIPPINE BUSINESS MAN, WHO IS A STAUCH SUPPORTER OF MARCOS, HAS OFFERED TO WAGER WITH ME THAT SHE WILL BE ASSASSINATED BEFORE THE END OF 1977.

12. IF THIS WERE TO HAPPEN, IT WOULD INTRODUCE MANY NEW
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FACTORS INTO THE EQUATION. THE "DYNASTY" FORMULA WOULD HAVE TO BE REVISED. THE GROUP OF LEFT-WING ADVISERS WHO CURRENTLY CLUSTER AROUND MRS. MARCOS WOULD BE REMOVED FROM POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE. MARCOS WOULD HAVE TO SEEK NEW ALLIES IN THE CREATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE FAMILY FORTUNES AND PRESERVE THE FAMILY INFLUENCE. IT IS HARD TO PREDICT EXACTLY WHERE HIS LEADERSHIP WOULD TREND WITHOUT THE PARTNERSHIP OF HIS WIFE.

13. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, MARCOS PERSONALLY WERE THE VICTIM OF AN ASSASSIN OR AN ACT OF FATE, THE PROSPECTS SEEM FAIRLY PREDICTABLE. HIS WIFE HAS MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT SHE WOULD MAKE A SWIFT, DECISIVE BID FOR POWER. I THINK IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT THIS EFFORT WOULD TOUCH OFF A REACTION IN THE ARMED FORCES. THE YOUNGER PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS, PARTICULARLY THE MILITARY ACADEMY CLASS OF 1951 (WHICH IS CLOSELY KIT CLIQUE) HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHIANG CHING WAS HANDLED IN THE PRC. THEY HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN THE NARC ROLE IN THAILAND. THEY COULD BE EXPECTED TO MOVE SHARPLY AGAINST A DISTAFF COUP AND ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT UNDER THEIR PATRONAGE. THEY WOULD DOUBTLESS INSTALL SOME FAVORITE, SUCH AS DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE, OR PERHAPS THE MORE PRESENTABLE, IMPECCABLY HONEST AND COMPETENT GENERAL RAMOS AS PRESIDENT. THEY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO ENCOURAGE A RAPID RETURN TO A DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION. HOWEVER, BEING RELATIVELY IDEALISTIC, THEY MIGHT DEVOTE GREATER EFFORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY AND THE MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME. THEY WOULD HAVE LITTLE TOLDERANCE FOR TAX EVADERS, AND OTHER "AMLEFACTORS OF GREAT WEALTH."

14. ALL OF THESE PROSPECTS FACE THE UNITED STATES WITH

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DIFFICULTIES. AS A NATION, THE PHILIPPINES IS IMPORTANT
TO US. STRATEGICALLY IT CONSTITUTES A POSITION IN CONTROL
OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN SEA LANES, AND HARBORS OUR TWO LARGEST
MILITARY BASES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. HISTORICALLY,
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WE ASSUMED A CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PHILIPPINES
WHEN WE MADE IT OUR COLONY FOR NEARLY FIFTY YEARS, AND
WE CAN NOT MERELY SHIRK THAT TODAY. IN ECONOMIC TERMS,
THE PHLIPPINES IS CAPABLE OF RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND ITS
PEOPLE DESERVE SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH WE CAN ASSIST IN
PROVIDING THEM. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, THIS COUNTRY
SHOULD BE ONE THAT WE WOULD NORMALLY EMBRACE WARMLY AS
A FRIEND AND ALLY, ONE WHICH WE SEEK TO ASSIST IN EVERY
POSSIBLE WAY.

15. HOWEVER MUCH THOSE INTERESTS AND SENTIMENTS MOVE US,
THE "TAR BABY" ASPECTS RECITED IN THE EARLIER PARAGRAPHS
MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR OUR EMBRACE TO BE TRULY SPONTANEOUS
AND GENUINE. OUR ALOOFNESS IS, OF COURSE, IMMEDIATELY
APPARENT TO MARCOS, AND EXPECIALLY TO HIS HIGHLY SUBJECTIVE
WIFE. THEY, THEREFORE, THROUGH THEIR CONTROLLED MEDIA,
APPEAL TOTHE WELL-KNOWN PHILIPPINE PARANOIA CONCERNING
UNREQUITTED AFFECTION FROM THE AMERICANS AND OUR RELATIONS
BECOME PRICKLY. NONE OF THE VARIANT SCENARIOS PROJECTED
IN THIS CABLE FOR THE FUTURE POLITICAL PROSPECTS IN THE
PHILIPPINES SEEMS TO ALTER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.
CONSEQUENTLY, I BELIEVE MY SUCCESSOR (AND HIS AS WELL)
WILL HAVE TO RECONCILE HIMSELF TO A LESS THAN SATISFACTORY
SITUATIO, IN WHICH THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
EVOLUTION OF THE PHILIPPINES IS SLOWER THAN IT SHOULD
BE IN WHICH OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THAT PROCESS IS LESS THAN
IT SHOULD BE, AND IN WHICH OUR RELATIONS WILL BE AFFLICTED
WITH PETTY IRRITANTS.

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16. UNITED STATES AND PHILIPPINE MAJOR, LONG RUN NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE GENERALLY COMPLEMENTARY AND MOST FILIPINO LEADERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO PERCEIVE THEM AS SUCH. THE EXCEPTION IS MRS. MARCOS, WHOSE JUDGMENTS ARE ENTIRELY SUBJECTIVE AND WHO LACKS THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND ON WHICH TO BASE SOPHISTICATED POLICY; BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL SHE WOULD EVER HOLD PERSONAL AUTHORITY FOR ANY PERIOD. MOREOVER, AT THE POPULAR LEVEL THERE IS AN ENORMOUS RESERVOIR OF GOOD WILL, RESPECT AND AFFECTION FOR THE UNITED STATES AMONG FILIPINOS. RECIPROCALLY, THERE ARE INTIMATE HISTORICAL AND EMOTIONAL BONDS AMONG AMERICANS FOR FILIPINOS.
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CONSEQUENTLY THERE IS NO REASON TO EXPECT ANY SHARP, DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE ORIENTATION OF UNITED STATES-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS VERY LITTLE PROSPECT THAT THEY CAN OR WILL ASSUME THE WHOLE-HEARTED WARMTH AND CLOSENESS WHICH WOULD BEFIT THE POPULAR AND NATURAL INSTINCTS OF OUR TWO PEOPLES.

17. WITHIN THE LIMITES OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS, OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO ENDURE AT THEIR CURRENT MORE OR LESS SATISFACTORY LEVEL. HOWEVER, IF OUR EMPHASIS UPON HUMAN RIGHTS OR PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT SENSITIVITIES ABOUT U.S. CRITICISM OF ITS REGIME BECOME MORE ACUTE, WE CAN EXPECT SOME LIMITED DETERIORATION. THE LIMITS WILL BE SET BY A SHREWD MARCOS JUDGMENT CONCERNING PHILIPPINE NATIONAL INTERESTS IN MAINTAINING

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CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS
BY THE OVERWHELMING POPULAR PHILIPPINE ATTITUDES, WHICH
WOULD BE OFFENDED BY A DELIBERATELY ANTI-AMERICAN POLICY
ON THE PART OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT.
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